



News Release

Oregon Department of Forestry

Southwest Oregon District

Oregon Department of Forestry
Southwest Oregon District
5286 Table Rock Rd.
Central Point, OR 97502

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fire Season Begins May 15, 2026 in Jackson and Josephine Counties

This declaration affects 1.8 million acres of Oregon Department of Forestry Southwest Oregon District-protected lands

JACKSON & JOSEPHINE COUNTIES, Ore. (May 12, 2026) – The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Southwest Oregon District will officially declare the start of fire season on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 12:01 a.m. The fire danger level will be “Low” (green) and the Industrial Fire Precaution Level (IFPL) will be I (one). Lands affected by this declaration include 1.8 million acres of state, private, county, city and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) forestlands in Jackson and Josephine counties.

While winter and spring rains are on track for a slightly below normal water year, snowpack across the state and local landscape is minimal, and drought conditions across both counties are contributing to dry vegetation and an increased risk for fires to start and spread earlier in the year. As conditions continue to trend toward warmer summer-like weather, fire risk and behavior will naturally increase.

The beginning of fire season and Low fire danger brings regulations; these activities are known to cause fires and will be prohibited with the start of fire season:

- No debris burning, including piles and debris burned in burn barrels.
- No fireworks on or within 1/8 of a mile of ODF-protected land.
- Exploding targets and tracer ammunition, or any bullet with a pyrotechnic charge in its base, are prohibited.
- Campfires are allowed in designated campgrounds, on BLM land, and on

private land with the landowner's permission. Designated campgrounds are available online at www.swofire.com/maps. The following are required where open fires and appliances are allowed: one shovel and one gallon of water or 2½ pound fire extinguisher.

- The use of portable appliances such as camp stoves and fire pits using liquified or bottled fuels are allowed anytime in clear areas* free of flammable vegetation.
- Charcoal and pellet barbecues/smokers are allowed at residential home sites that are fully developed, landscaped, and maintained when used in a cleared area* that is free from flammable vegetation. A charged garden hose or one 2½ pound fire extinguisher must be immediately available.
- Smoking while traveling will only be allowed in enclosed vehicles on improved roads, in boats on the water and other specifically designated locations.
- Any electric fence controllers must be approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc., or be certified by the Department of Consumer and Business Services and be installed and used in compliance with the fence controller's instructions for fire safe operation.

****Cleared Area Definition: Free of flammable vegetation for 50 feet in all directions.***

The start of fire season also means regulations on industrial activities. *Under IFPL I (one), fire season requirements are in effect, in addition to the following:*

- A Firewatch is required at this and all higher levels unless otherwise waived.

For more information about the Oregon Department of Forestry's Fire Season regulations, please call or visit the Southwest Oregon District unit office nearest to you:

Medford Unit, 5286 Table Rock Rd., Central Point – (541) 664-3328

Grants Pass Unit, 5375 Monument Dr., Grants Pass – (541) 474-3152

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